

# **JUVENILE JUSTICE TASK FORCE**

## **A Collaboration of: The Judicial Branch, The Children's Cabinet, and The University of Maine School of Law**

<b>Type:</b>	<b>Task Force</b>
<b>Established:</b>	<b>April 17, 2009</b>
<b>Tri-Chairs:</b>	<b>Hon. Leigh I. Saufley, Chief Justice Karen Baldacci, First Lady Dean Peter Pitegoff, University of Maine School of Law</b>
<b>Report Date:</b>	<b>February 1, 2010</b>
<b>Reports to:</b>	<b>Governor, Supreme Judicial Court, University of Maine School of Law</b>
<b>Completion Date:</b>	<b>May 1, 2010</b>

### **I. Background**

Maine cannot afford to lose one more of its young people to prison and jails, to homelessness, to hopelessness. Although the last decade has seen dramatic improvements in Maine's juvenile corrections facilities, the State's response to juveniles in our communities is in urgent need of improvement. The future for disconnected youth, those who have dropped out of school, those who have lost connections with family and communities, is bleak.

Currently many promising programs and a growing body of research exist which, if utilized well, could dramatically improve the futures our youth, prevent and remedy disconnections, and assure that they are welcomed in school and graduate to full lives. However, too many obstacles currently stand in the path of creating those positive outcomes. Differing financial sources drive decisions for treatment and resources rather than the needs of the youth and family. Knowledge of successful programs and evidence-based practices is not uniformly known or shared by all stakeholders. Community involvement is in serious need of support. Our education system needs support in connecting to appropriate resources to promote connection and graduation. Perhaps most urgent, the inevitable limitation of resources caused by a faltering economy demands that we make the very best, most effective, use of every dollar dedicated to helping our young people.

## **II. Goals:**

The Juvenile Task Force is established to

- Bring together all of the best and most credible research into programs that are the most effective with youth and their families;
- Provide all stakeholders with the most current information on effective intervention with youth through a Summit and a thorough report;
- Review the current practices in Maine's juvenile justice community;
- Recommend changes in resource allocation, program use, intervention practices, and legal procedures; and
- Track and modify objective measurement tools to provide a blueprint for going forward with substantially improved practices.

## **III. Principles**

The results of the Task Force's efforts will be demonstrated to

- A. Support youth and their families throughout Maine to assure high school graduation, and post-secondary opportunities or meaningful employment;
- B. Assure that the services provided to disconnected youth are determined by the needs of the youth and family rather than artificially established funding channels;
- C. Assure that services are provided whenever possible in a community setting, with the goal of strengthening positive peer and family relationships;
- D. Minimize correctional experiences and focus on concepts of restorative justice, positive youth development, and rehabilitation;
- E. Assure that the decision-makers, including JCCOs, judges, teachers, school administrators, legislators, prosecutors, local law enforcement, legal advocates, treatment providers, representatives of the Children's

Cabinet, community leaders, private sector and philanthropic donors have the best and most updated information regarding the efficacy of programs, policies, and resource use;

- F. Examine system-wide trends and make recommendations to prioritize aspects of system-wide organizational development and training;
- G. Identify the many needs for training, competency building, and organizational development;
- H. Ensure that youth and their families find and utilize appropriate resources and treatment;
- I. Provide organizational support to the child advocate attorneys through training, standards of practice, and direct support;
- J. Identify and eliminate systemic barriers to effective solutions to juvenile justice problems; and
- K. Provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to meet, receive state of the art education and information related to youth development services, and plan for the next several years.

### **III. Duties:**

The Task Force will:

- A. Evaluate, compile, and summarize the current state of knowledge, from both national and statewide studies, and to compare these findings with current practices in Maine's juvenile justice system;
- B. Identify funding sources and eligibility requirements and compare those with service needs of juveniles and their families;
- C. Observe and evaluate current agency, program, and judicial procedures and practices;
- D. Develop and present recommendations for changes in policy and programs to the court system, the Legislature, the Executive Office, and municipal/county officials;
- E. Sponsor a full-day Juvenile Justice Summit for the purpose of unveiling the findings of the Task Force, to publicize the work of the Task Force, to solicit comments and recommendations from key stakeholders, to raise public awareness of juvenile justice issues in Maine, and to plan for the future;
- F. Make recommendations to the Court for improved rules regarding juvenile proceedings;
- G. Make recommendations for improved fiscal allocations, procedures and practices to Executive Branch agencies;

- H. Make recommendations for improved policy and operations to school districts, municipal, and county operations;
- I. Make recommendations to grant administrators and other recipients of services funds that will allow for the most flexible use of resources to meet the actual needs of youth and families;
- J. If necessary, make recommendations to the Legislature for statutory augmentation to allow the best outcomes for youth and families; and
- K. Establish a process for the continuation of the study and implementation of Task Force recommendations.

#### **IV. Authority:**

The Task Force may seek input, suggestions, and recommendations from individuals and groups within and outside the collaborating entities. The Task Force may invite consultants to its meetings as needed.

The Task Force Co-Chairs may establish subgroups to study designated issues and report recommendations for consideration by the Task Force as a whole.

At present, there is no funding authorized for the work of the Task Force. Should funds become available, the Muskie School of Public Service shall act as the fiscal agent.

#### **V. Membership:**

The membership in the Task Force shall consist of members from the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches of Maine State Government, as well as representatives of interested stakeholder organizations, individual attorneys, and others with valuable knowledge and experience to contribute. Members from the Legislative and Executive Branches of Government shall be appointed by order of the Chief Justice upon recommendation and concurrence of Legislative Leadership, or the Governor or Commissioner, as appropriate.

The specific names shall be listed in a separate membership roster, and membership may be changed or expanded as recommended by the Co-Chairs and ordered by the Chief Justice.

The Co-Chairs are authorized to convene an Executive Planning Committee of no less than ten members who shall be responsible for developing an action agenda for consideration at the first meeting of the Task Force. The Executive Planning Committee will exist for the duration of the Task Force and it shall

review current data, identify additional research items, and review staffing/resource development issues.

**VI. Meetings:**

The Task Force shall meet as often as is necessary to fulfill its responsibilities and no less than once each month. The Co-Chairs shall schedule the meetings of the Task Force.

**VII. Staffing:**

The Muskie School of Public Service, the University of Maine School of Law, and AmeriCorp VISTA volunteers shall provide staffing for the Commission.

**VIII. Reporting:**

The Task Force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor, Supreme Judicial Court, Legislature, and the University of Maine Board of Trustees no later than February 1, 2010.

**IX. Task Force Duration:**

Unless the Chief Justice extends this charter, the Task Force will cease to exist on May 1, 2010.

Dated: May 21, 2009

Approved by:

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Leigh I. Saufley  
Chief Justice